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(54) METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PREPARING AN ELECTRONIC RECORD FOR SHIPPING A PARCEL

VERFAHREN UND SYSTEM ZUM ERSTELLEN EINES ELEKTRONISCHEN DATENSATZES FÜR DEN TRANSPORT EINES PAKETS

PROCEDE ET SYSTEME PERMETTANT DE PREPARER UN DOCUMENT ELECTRONIQUE POUR EXPEDIER UN COLIS

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Description**Technical Field**

[0001] The present invention relates generally to the shipping of parcels, and more particularly to an improved system for, and method of, preparing an electronic record for shipping a parcel.

Background of the Invention

[0002] Parcel delivery companies, such as UNITED PARCEL SERVICE, maintain computerized shipping records for the purposes of tracking parcels. Traditionally, a shipping customer obtains tracking information by calling a customer service representative, who accesses his or her company's computer system and relays the requested information to the customer. Package shipping records are manually keyed into a company's computer system from parcel shipping forms, which are completed by customers. Thus, to provide an interface between parcel delivery companies and customers, this method of shipping and tracking parcels requires the use of key entry operators and customer service representatives. Consequently, the method is both labor intensive and costly. Moreover, the method can be frustrating for customers when no customer service representative is immediately available to provide needed information.

[0003] More recently, parcel delivery companies have developed for large customers tracking software that operates in a personal computer environment. The tracking software permits customers to directly access a delivery company's computer system and obtain needed information. Thus, customers with a personal computer and the tracking software no longer need to interact with a customer service representative every time information is required. Accordingly, the tracking software permits delivery companies to operate more efficiently because fewer customer service representatives are needed.

[0004] Parcel delivery companies have similarly developed shipping software for customers. The shipping software allows customers to enter their shipping records into personal computers, from where the records are uploaded to the delivery company's computer system (see e.g. US-A-5 222 018). Accordingly, the shipping records no longer need to be manually keyed into the delivery company's computer system. Further, the shipping software prints machine readable parcel labels that allow the parcels to be machine sorted, which is both more efficient and more accurate. Thus, the shipping software, along with the tracking software, permits parcel delivery companies to provide shipping customers with improved, more efficient service.

[0005] Typically, however, only large volume shipping customers can take advantage of such shipping and tracking software. This is because small volume ship-

ping customers, which are mostly small businesses, may lack the required personal computer system, the desire to allocate resources to purchase such a system, and/or the expertise to operate the software. Accordingly, small volume shipping customers must rely on the traditional method of shipping and tracking parcels. As a consequence, parcel delivery companies must provide key entry operators and customer service representatives as an interface with small volume shipping customers.

[0006] Therefore, a need exists in the art for a system for, and method of, providing small volume shipping customers with direct access to a parcel delivery company's computer system. The method and system should be affordable and intuitive.

Summary of the Invention

[0007] The present invention as claimed seeks to provide an improved system for, and method of, preparing an electronic shipping record of a parcel, which uses an intelligent telephone for preparing an electronic shipping record of a parcel, prints machine readable parcel labels, validates zip code information of a parcel, generates an identification number of a parcel, displays a recipient shipping list as part of a parcel shipping procedure, accesses a tracking database and a billing database, and transmits information to a central computer to indicate a parcel is ready for shipment.

[0008] In accordance with the invention, these objects are accomplished by providing a method and system for preparing an electronic shipping record of a parcel. The system utilizes an intelligent telephone to display a parcel shipping procedure as a menu of choices for selection, to store delivery information received via the parcel shipping procedure as a shipping record of a parcel, and to transmit the shipping record to update a parcel database.

[0009] Generally described, the present invention provides an intelligent telephone for preparing an electronic shipping record of a parcel. The intelligent telephone includes a processor connected to an input device for receiving information, a data transfer device for receiving and transmitting information, an information storage device, and a screen device for displaying information. The processor is configured to store a parcel shipping procedure and to display the parcel shipping procedure on the screen device as a menu of choices for selection.

[0010] The processor receives delivery information relating to a parcel via the parcel shipping procedure. The delivery information is stored as a shipping record of the parcel. Preferably, the delivery information includes a recipient, a delivery address, a shipping date, and an identification number.

[0011] In a preferred embodiment, the data transfer device is selectively operable to receive a parcel shipping procedure from a central computer of a parcel de-

livery company and to transmit shipping records to the central computer. The central computer is equipped with a modem to receive the shipping records and to transmit updates of the parcel shipping procedure to the intelligent telephone.

[0012] The present invention might typically be used as follows. A parcel shipping procedure is downloaded from a central computer of a parcel deliver company to the office of a shipping customer. The parcel shipping procedure is received by an intelligent telephone and stored to the telephone's memory device.

[0013] To prepare a parcel shipping record, a customer enters a selection for shipping services from a menu displayed on the screen device of the intelligent telephone. In the preferred embodiment, non-selectable features of the parcel shipping procedure are disabled and displayed in a dimmed style to indicate the same. Also, context-based help is displayed upon request.

[0014] The customer selects a recipient, a service level, and additional services wanted for a parcel, each of which is displayed on the screen as a menu of choices for selection. These selections comprise delivery information for the parcel and are stored as a shipping record of the parcel.

[0015] Upon completion of the shipping record, a label is printed for affixation to the parcel. Preferably, the label is printed from a bit map so that an inexpensive printer can be used and is machine readable so that the parcel can be sorted by machine. After printing is finished, the shipping record is transmitted to the central computer to indicate that the parcel is ready for shipment and to update a tracking database. Additionally, a billing record associated with shipping the parcel is determined from the shipping record to update a billing database.

[0016] Using the intelligent telephone, a shipping customer can access the tracking database and track a parcel by identification number, by date of shipment, and by the recipient. Similarly, a shipping customer can access the billing database to track shipping expenses.

[0017] Other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent upon examining the following description of preferred embodiments of the invention, when taken in conjunction with the drawings and the appended claims.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0018] Fig. 1 is a block diagram of a system for preparing an electronic shipping record of a parcel in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0019] Fig. 2 is a diagrammatic view showing the information transmitted between the components of the system of Fig. 1 in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0020] Fig. 3 is a state diagram showing the states for displaying a shipping menu and a tracking menu in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present

invention.

[0021] Figs. 4A-4F are a sequence of screen displays from the user's perspective showing the process of entering a shipping menu and a tracking menu in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0022] Figs. 5A-5B are logical flow diagrams showing the sequence of steps for preparing a shipping record of a parcel with the intelligent telephone of the present invention.

[0023] Figs. 6A-6Q are a sequence of screen displays from the user's perspective showing the process of preparing a shipping record of a parcel with the intelligent telephone of the present invention in accordance with the preferred embodiment.

[0024] Fig. 7A-7C are machine readable labels printed during the process of preparing a shipping record in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0025] Fig. 8 is a logical flow diagram showing the sequence of steps for tracking a parcel with the intelligent telephone of the present invention in accordance with the preferred embodiment.

[0026] Figs. 9A-9F are a sequence of screen displays from the user's perspective showing the process of tracking a parcel with the intelligent telephone of the present invention in accordance with the preferred embodiment.

[0027] Fig. 10 is a logical flow diagram showing the sequence of steps for updating a recipient shipping list stored in the intelligent telephone of the present invention in accordance with the preferred embodiment.

[0028] Figs. 11A-11C are a sequence of screen displays from the user's perspective showing the process of updating a recipient shipping list stored in the intelligent telephone of the present invention in accordance with the preferred embodiment.

Detailed Description

[0029] Referring to the drawings, in which like numerals refer to like parts throughout the several views, Fig. 1 shows the components of a system 12 for preparing an electronic shipping record of a parcel. As used herein, the term "parcel" means any item handled by delivery services, such as packages, letters, containers, or unpackaged items.

[0030] The system 12 includes an intelligent telephone 14, of the type known as a smart phone. The smart phone 14 includes a processor or CPU 16 that is typically implemented as a microprocessor. The processor 16 is operative to control various devices within the smart phone 14 to retrieve, process, store, and display data. A preferred smart phone 14 for use in connection with the present invention is model P100A manufactured by Philips, Burlington, MA.

[0031] A display screen 18 is connected to the processor 16 via a screen driver circuit 20, which operates

the input and display functions of the display screen. In the preferred embodiment, the display screen 18 uses an LCD display. However, as will be understood by those skilled in the art, other types of displays, such as a CRT display, may be used in conjunction with the present invention.

[0032] The processor 16 is connected to an input device 22. In the preferred embodiment, the input device 22 includes a set of programmable keys, an alphabet keyboard, and a numeric keypad. The functions of the programmable keys are predefined, but may be varied depending on the mode of operation of the smart phone 14. The current functions of the programmable keys are displayed along a portion of the display screen 18. Accordingly, only a limited number of programmable keys, taking up limited space, need be provided with the smart phone 14.

[0033] Alternatively, the input device 22 may be associated with a display device to form a touch-sensitive data entry and display screen. Such a display screen is capable of interpreting handwriting and of defining button or key areas. For example, the screen may display a typewriter keyboard, a numeric keypad, or controls that cause certain operations to occur. For a touch-sensitive data entry and display screen, a stylus (not shown) is used in cooperation with the display screen for data entry. This is done by engaging a tip of the stylus against the display screen and touching controls defined by the screen or writing on the screen.

[0034] Additionally, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that data may be entered by other means, including audibly. Furthermore, textual instructions and statements presented to the user on the display screen 18 may be audibly announced using voice wave files and a voice chip built into the smart phone 14.

[0035] The processor 16 is also connected to an information storage device 24, which may be RAM (protected by a battery back up), a removable memory card, or other memory capable for use with a smart phone. In the preferred embodiment, the information storage device 24 is a 128 K Flash RAM device capable of storing system parameters, phone numbers, addresses, and a shipping procedure for preparing a shipping record of a parcel and for tracking the parcel. Additionally, the information storage device 24 includes a zip code database 25 for validating zip codes of parcels prepared for shipment in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0036] An input/output (I/O) circuit 26 is connected to the processor 16 and controls communications between the smart phone 14 and other devices through a data transfer device. The preferred data transfer device is a modem 28, which can access a computer network via normal and cellular telephone lines. The modem 28 is a known device for communication between devices that are remote to one another and will not be further described herein.

[0037] The input/output (I/O) circuit 26 is also con-

nected to a printer 32. A preferred printer 32 for use in connection with the present invention is model SII manufactured by Selko Instruments, which is a low cost bit map label printer.

5 [0038] The smart phone 14 further includes an integrated handset 30 and associated features for normal telephone operation. Use of the smart phone 14 for preparing a parcel shipping record is preferred because it provides a unique combination of a familiar telephone supplemented with a display screen. Accordingly, the smart phone 14 is non-threatening to computer novices, who may be intimidated by a personal computer system or a computer terminal.

10 [0039] The smart phone 14 is also preferred because it includes an integrated modem, input device, and data transfer device necessary for accessing a computer system of a parcel delivery company. Moreover, the smart phone 14 is relatively inexpensive and can be installed by connection to a normal telephone line.

15 [0040] In the preferred embodiment, the system 12 includes a central computer system 34 and a remote computer 36 of a parcel delivery company. The central computer system 34 includes a customer server 38, which provides an interface with the smart phone 14, and a main frame 40. The customer server 38 and the main frame 40 are connected to one another via normal or cellular telephone lines using a modem 42 of the customer server and a modem 44 of the main frame.

20 [0041] The central computer system 34 communicates with the smart phone 14 via normal or cellular telephone lines using the modem 42 of the customer server 38 and the modem 28 of the smart phone. Shipping records generated with the smart phone 14 are uploaded to the customer server 38 and relayed to the main frame 40 for updating a tracking database 46 and a billing database 48.

25 [0042] The tracking database 46 stores a plurality of shipping records of parcels and the status of the parcels. The billing database 48 stores billing records associated with shipping the parcels. The billing records are determined from the shipping records.

30 [0043] The remote computer 36 may be mounted in a parcel car 54 to notify a driver that a parcel is ready for shipment. When a shipping record is received from the smart phone 14, the customer server 38 sets a flag in a parcel pickup system 56 to indicate that a parcel is ready for shipment. The parcel pickup system 56 relays that information to the remote computer via cellular telephone lines using a cellular link 50 of the customer server 38 and a cellular link 52 of the remote computer.

35 [0044] An overview of the information transmitted between the components of the system 12 for preparing an electronic shipping record of a parcel is shown by Fig. 2. A parcel shipping procedure is stored in the customer server 38 and downloaded to the smart phone 14 when the phone is first installed and when the procedure has been modified since the last downloading operation. Such downloading is automatic and takes place behind

the scenes without intervention on the part of a customer using the smart phone 14.

[0045] The parcel shipping procedure is received by the smart phone 14 and stored to the information storage device 24. Using the parcel shipping procedure, a customer prepares a parcel shipping record by entering selections from a series of menus displayed on the screen 18. In the preferred embodiment, non-selectable features of the parcel shipping procedure are disabled and displayed in a dimmed style to indicate the same. Also, context based help is displayed upon request.

[0046] The customer selects a recipient, a service level, and additional services wanted for a parcel, each of which is displayed on the screen as a menu of choices for selection. These selections comprise delivery information for the parcel and are stored as part of a shipping record of the parcel.

[0047] Upon completion of the shipping record, the delivery information is relayed to the printer 32 in bit map form for printing of a label for affixation to the parcel. Preferably, the label is machine readable so that the parcel is machine sortable.

[0048] After printing is finished, the shipping record is transmitted to the customer server 38 of the central computer system 34. The customer server 38 relays the shipping record to the main frame 40 to update the tracking database 46 and the billing database 48. Additionally, the customer server 38 sets a flag in the parcel pick-up system 56, which relays to the remote computer 36 that the parcel is ready for shipment. In this way, a driver is automatically notified of parcels that need to be shipped.

[0049] Using the smart phone 14, a customer can access the tracking database 46 and the billing database 48 to obtain wanted information. Requests for such information are uploaded to the customer server 38 and relayed to the main frame 40. The wanted information is then downloaded to the customer server 38 and relayed to the smart phone 14.

[0050] The method of the present invention for preparing an electronic record for shipping a parcel will now be described. Fig. 3 is a state diagram showing the states for displaying a shipping and a tracking menu, and for configuring recipient and shipper information in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention. Screen displays of the user process are shown by Figs. 4A-4F.

[0051] When the smart phone 14 is activated, the process displays a main menu screen at state 100 from which a customer may select the parcel service menu. In the preferred embodiment, the parcel service is "UNITED PARCEL SERVICE," the assignee herein. The main menu is shown by the screen display of Fig. 4A.

[0052] As shown by Fig. 4A, selections 93 of the main menu, and of other menus, are displayed in the center of the display screen 18. A selection is made from a menu by choosing on the numerical keypad the number

associated with the selection. As further shown by Fig. 4A, functions of the programmable keys 95 for the main menu screen, and for other screens, are displayed along a bottom portion of the display screen 18. A function is selected from a screen display by choosing the programmable key associated with that function.

[0053] To prepare a parcel for shipment or to track a parcel, the customer selects parcel service from the main menu. Upon the parcel service selection, the parcel service branch of state 100 leads to state 102 where a parcel service menu is displayed. The parcel service menu is shown by the screen display of Fig. 4B.

[0054] As shown by Fig. 4B, the customer may select shipping services, tracking services, recipient list setup, or shipper setup from the parcel service menu. The customer may also choose "exit" in which case the exit branch of state 102 returns to state 100 where the main menu is displayed. In all other cases, the exit branch of a state returns to state 102, where the parcel service menu is displayed. Additionally, the customer may choose help at any time to receive information relevant to the current screen.

[0055] To prepare a parcel for shipment, the customer selects shipping from the parcel service menu. In response to a shipping selection, the shipping branch of state 102 leads to state 104 where a shipping menu is displayed. The shipping menu is shown by the screen display of Fig. 4C. From the shipping menu, as shown by Fig. 4C, the customer may select to prepare a parcel for shipment, to review a parcel prepared for shipment, to void a parcel prepared for shipment, or to start end of day processing.

[0056] To track a parcel, the customer selects tracking from the parcel service menu. In response to a tracking selection, the tracking branch of state 102 leads to state 106 where a tracking menu is displayed. The tracking menu is shown by the screen display of Fig. 4D. From the tracking menu, as shown by Fig. 4D, the customer may select to track a parcel by number, by date, or by recipient.

[0057] To add, delete or modify information associated with a recipient, the customer selects recipient list setup from the parcel service menu. In response to a recipient selection, the recipient branch of state 102 leads to state 108 where the recipient list is displayed as a menu of choices for selection. The recipient list menu is shown by the screen display of Fig. 4E. From the recipient list, the customer may select to review a recipient. A customer may also, as is described below in more detail, search and sort the recipient list. By choosing the go back function, the customer may further, as in all cases, return to the previous screen.

[0058] To configure the shipper settings of the smart phone 14, the customer selects shipper setup from the parcel service menu. In response to a shipper setup selection, the shipper branch of state 102 leads to state 110 where a screen is displayed for entering information about the customer. In the preferred embodiment, the

shipper information is included as part of a parcel shipping record so that the parcel can be associated with, and billed to the customer. The shipper entry screen is shown by the screen display of Fig. 4F. From the shipper entry screen, as shown by Fig. 4F, the customer may choose to clear or modify the current information. When the customer has completed any necessary modifications, the process stores the updated shipper setup to the information storage device 24. From state 110, the customer may exit to the parcel service menu.

[0059] Figs. 5A-5B are logical flow diagrams showing the procedure for preparing a parcel shipping record in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention. Screen displays of the user process are shown by Figs. 6A-6Q.

[0060] From the shipping menu at state 104, as previously discussed in connection with Fig. 4C, the customer may select to prepare a parcel for shipment, to review a parcel prepared for shipment, to void a parcel prepared for shipment, or to start end of day processing. If the customer selects to prepare a parcel for shipment, the parcel preparation branch of state 106 leads to state 120 where a list of recipients is displayed as a menu of choices for selection. In the preferred embodiment, the recipient list is initially displayed alphabetically, but may be manipulated by the customer. The recipient list menu is shown by the screen display of Fig. 6A.

[0061] If the recipient to whom the parcel is to be shipped is not included in the list, the customer may add that recipient to the list by selecting the new recipient function. If the recipient is included in the list, but cannot be easily found, the customer may sort the recipient list by company name or search the list by keyword.

[0062] To add a new recipient to the list, the customer selects the new recipient function. Upon receipt of that selection, the new recipient branch of state 120 leads to state 122 where a screen is displayed for entering information for a new recipient. The recipient entry screen is shown by the screen display of Fig. 6B. The customer enters information for the new recipient and then selects the "OK" function. Upon receipt of that function, the OK branch of state 122 leads to step decisional 124 where the zip code is validated.

[0063] The zip code is validated by comparing it with the zip code database 25 to determine if the zip code is proper for the state that was entered therewith. If the zip code is invalid, the NO branch of decisional step 124 returns to state 122 where the customer may modify the zip code and repeat the validation process. If the zip code is valid, the YES branch of decisional step 124 proceeds to step 126 where the delivery information of the new recipient is stored to the information storage device 24. Step 126 returns to state 120 where the recipient list menu is displayed and the customer may select the new recipient.

[0064] To find a recipient included in the recipient list, the customer may sort the list by company name or search the list by keyword. Choosing the options func-

tion from the recipient list menu shown in Fig. 6A displays the screen of Fig. 6C for sorting and searching the recipient list.

[0065] To sort the recipient list by company name, the customer chooses the sort selection at state 120. The sort branch of state 120 leads to step 130 where the list is sorted. Proceeding to step 132, the recipient list is displayed in that sorted order. Step 132 returns to state 120 so that the customer can select a recipient from the sorted list.

[0066] To search the recipient list by keyword, the customer chooses the search selection at state 120. The search branch of state 120 leads to step 140 where a keyword is received from the customer. Next, at step 142, the recipient list is searched for the keyword. Proceeding to step 144, the recipients fitting the search criteria are displayed as the recipient list. Step 144 returns to state 120 so that the customer can select the recipient from the list generated by the search.

[0067] From the recipient list, whether the list is in the default alphabetical order, a sorted-by-company order, or comprises the results of a search, the customer selects the recipient to whom the parcel is to be shipped at state 120. Upon receipt of a selection, the process proceeds to state 150 where the different levels of shipping service are displayed as a menu of choices for selection. The service level menu is shown by the screen display of Fig. 6D. From the service level menu, the customer selects the desired level of service by choosing the number associated with that level of service. Thus, for example, the customer selects "NEXT DAY AIR" service by choosing the number one (1) from the service level menu.

[0068] Upon receipt of a service level, the process proceeds to state 152 where a screen for entering the weight of the parcel is displayed. The weight entry screen is shown by the screen display of Fig. 6E. The customer enters the weight of the parcel and then selects the OK function. After receipt of that function, the process proceeds to state 154 where additional services are displayed as a menu of choices for selection. The additional services menu is shown by the screen display of Fig. 6F. From the additional services menu, the customer selects the additional services desired and then selects the OK function.

[0069] Upon receipt of that function, the process proceeds to state 156 where a confirmation screen is displayed showing the information selected for the parcel. The confirmation screen is shown by the screen display of Fig. 6G. From the confirmation screen, the customer may choose to change the entered information or, if it is correct, to proceed with printing a label for the parcel.

[0070] To change the information, the customer selects the change function from the confirmation screen. The change branch of state 156 leads to state 158 where the categories of recipient information, level of service, package weight, and additional services are displayed as a menu of choices for selection. The

change menu is shown by the screen display of Fig. 6H. From the change menu, the customer selects the category of information that is to be changed.

[0071] Upon such a selection, the process returns to the appropriate state the selected category. Thus, selection of recipient information causes the process to return to the recipient list menu at state 120, from where another recipient may be selected. Selection of the level a service category causes the process to return to the level of service menu at state 150, from where a new level of service may be selected. Selection of the parcel weight category causes the process to return to the weight entry screen at state 152, from where a different weight may be entered. Selection of the additional services category causes the process to return to the additional services menu at state 154, from where new or different additional services may be selected.

[0072] When the customer is satisfied with the parcel information, he or she proceeds with the parcel preparation process by selecting the print label function from the parcel confirmation screen of state 156. The print branch of state 156 leads to step 160 where an identification number is generated. In the preferred embodiment, the identification number is a unique number that can be used to track the parcel.

[0073] Next, at step 162, a bit map is generated for printing a shipping label. The step of generating a bit map allows an inexpensive printer to be used in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention. Step 162 leads to step 164 where a label is printed from the bit map.

[0074] The label, as shown by Figs. 7A-7B, comprises two parts. The first part, shown by Fig. 7A, prominently displays the recipients address in alphanumeric and machine readable format. The second part, shown by Fig. 7B, prominently displays the tracking number in alphanumeric and machine readable format. Accordingly, the parcel will be machine sortable in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0075] Proceeding to state 166, a shipping record of the parcel is stored to the information storage device 24. In the preferred embodiment, the parcel shipping record includes the recipient information, the level of service information, the weight information, and the additional services that were selected by the customer. Additionally the preferred parcel shipping record includes the tracking number and customer's shipper information, which is discussed below in more detail.

[0076] Proceeding to state 168, the tracking number is displayed and the customer queried whether he or she wants to prepare another parcel for shipment. The screen display for querying the customer is shown by Fig. 6I. If the customer chooses to prepare another parcel for shipment, the YES branch of state 168 returns to state 120 where the recipient list is displayed. If the customer chooses not to prepare another parcel for shipment, the NO branch of state 168 returns to the shipping menu of state 104 where other shipping operations may

be selected.

[0077] From the shipping menu at state 104, the customer may further choose to review the parcels of the day, to void a parcel, or to begin End of Day processing.

- 5 If the customer chooses to review a parcel from the shipping menu, the review branch of state 104 leads to state 170 where a list of the day's parcels is displayed as a menu of choices for selection. The parcel review menu is shown by the screen display of Fig. 6J. To review a parcel, the customer selects that parcel by choosing the number associated with the parcel. Upon receipt of a selection, the selection branch of state 170 leads to state 172 where the confirmation screen is displayed showing the information selected for the parcel. The parcel confirmation screen for reviewing a parcel is shown by Fig. 6K.

- 10 [0078] State 172 leads to step 174 where the customer is queried whether he or she wants to review another parcel. The screen display for step 174 is shown by Fig. 6L. If the customer chooses to review another parcel, the YES branch of step 174 returns to state 170 where the list of the day's parcels is displayed as a menu of choices for selection. If the customer chooses not to review another parcel, the NO branch of step 174 returns to the shipping menu of state 104 where other shipping operations may be selected.

- 15 [0079] If the customer chooses to void a parcel from the shipping menu, the void branch of state 104 leads to state 180 where the list of that day's parcels is displayed as a menu of choices for selection. The parcel void menu is shown by the screen display of Fig. 6M. To review a parcel for the purposes of voiding it, the customer selects a parcel by choosing the number associated with that parcel. Upon receipt of a selection, the selection branch of state 180 leads to state 182 where the confirmation screen of the parcel is displayed. The parcel confirmation screen for voiding a parcel is shown by Fig. 6N.

- 20 [0080] From the parcel confirmation screen at state 182, the customer may choose either to void or keep the parcel. If the customer chooses to keep the parcel, state 182 returns to the shipping menu of state 104 where other shipping operations may be selected. If the customer chooses to void the parcel, state 182 leads to step 184 where the parcel shipping record is erased from the information storage device.

- 25 [0081] Step 184 proceeds to step 186 where the customer is queried whether he or she wants to void another parcel. The screen display for step 186 is shown by Fig. 6O. If the customer chooses to void another parcel, the YES branch of step 186 returns to state 180 where the list of the day's parcels is displayed as a menu of choices for selection. If the customer chooses not to void another parcel, the NO branch of step 186 returns to the shipping menu of state 104 where other shipping operations may be selected.

- 30 [0082] After all parcels of the day have been prepared, the customer chooses End of Day from the ship-

ping menu at state 104. The End of Day branch of state 104 leads to state 190 where the parcels of the day are displayed. The display screen for state 190 is shown by Fig. 6P. To proceed, the customer selects the OK function. Upon receipt of that function, the process prints a parcel shipping summary at step 192. The parcel shipping summary is shown by Fig. 7C. The display screen during the printing process is shown by Fig. 6Q.

[0083] Step 192 leads to step 194 where the parcel shipping records of the day are uploaded to the customer server 38 of the central computer system 34. The customer server 38 relays the shipping records to the main frame 40 to update the tracking database 46 and the billing database 48. Accordingly, the packages can thereafter be tracked. Step 194 returns to the shipping menu of state 104.

[0084] Fig. 8 is a logical flow diagram showing the process for tracking a parcel in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention. Screen displays of the user process are shown by Figs. 9A-9F.

[0085] From the tracking menu at state 106, as previously discussed in connection with Fig. 4D, the customer may select to track a parcel by number, by date, or by recipient. If the track by number choice is selected from the tracking menu, the track by number branch of state 106 leads to state 200 where a screen is displayed for entering a number. The number entry screen is shown by the screen display of Fig. 9A. The customer then enters the number of the parcel that is to be tracked and selects the "OK" function. Upon receipt of that function, the OK branch of state 200 leads to step 202.

[0086] At step 202, the smart phone 14 calls the computer system 34 via telephone lines using the modem 28 of the smart phone and the modem 42 of the customer server 38. Next, at step 204, a request for tracking information is transmitted to the customer server 38. The customer server 38 relays the request to the main frame 40 via telephone lines using the modem 42 of the customer server 38 and the modem 44 of the main frame 40. The main frame 40 then accesses the tracking database 46, obtains the status of the parcel being tracked, and sends the status information to the customer server 38. The customer server 38, in turn, relays the status information to the smart phone 14. During this period the processing screen shown by Fig. 9B is displayed.

[0087] Proceeding to step 206, the status information is displayed to the customer. The parcel status screen is shown by the screen display of Fig. 9C. From the parcel status screen, as shown by Fig. 9C, the customer may determine whether the parcel has been delivered and, if so, by whom it was received and at what time.

[0088] Step 206 returns to the tracking menu at state 106. If the track by date choice is selected from the tracking menu, the track by date branch of state 106 leads to state 210 where a screen is displayed for entering a date. The date entry screen is shown by the screen display of Fig. 9D. The customer then enters the wanted date and selects the "OK" function. Upon receipt of that

function, the OK branch of state 210 leads to state 212. [0089] At state 212, a list of parcels shipped on the entered date is displayed as a menu of choices for selection. The list of parcels menu is shown by the screen display of Fig. 9E. If a parcel to be tracked is not visible in the display, the customer may sort the list of parcels by numbers or search the list for a keyword. Steps 214-216 for sorting the list and steps 220-224 for searching the list are similar to steps 130-132 and steps 140-144 of Fig. 5, respectively. Accordingly, they will not be separately described.

[0090] From the list of parcels screen of state 212, the customer selects the parcel that is to be tracked. Upon receipt of a selection, the process leads back to step 202, where, as previously discussed in connection with Fig. 9C, the smart phone 14 accesses the central computer system 34 to obtain the tracking status of the parcel.

[0091] Returning to the tracking menu at state 106, if the track by recipient choice is selected, the recipient branch of state 106 leads to state 230 where the list of recipients is displayed as a menu of choices for selection. The list of recipients menu is shown by the screen display of Fig. 9F. If the recipient of the parcel to be tracked is not visible in the display, the customer can sort the recipient list by company or search the list for a keyword. Steps 232-234 for sorting the list and steps 240-244 for searching the list are similar to steps 130-132 and steps 140-144 of Fig. 5, respectively. Accordingly, they will not be separately described.

[0092] From the list of recipients displayed at state 230, the customer selects the recipient of the parcel that is to be tracked. Upon receipt of a selection, the process leads back to step 202, where, as previously discussed in connection with Fig. 9C, the smart phone 14 accesses the central computer system 34 to obtain the tracking status of the parcel.

[0093] Fig. 10 is a logical flow diagram showing the process for updating a recipient list in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention. Screen displays of the user process are shown by Figs. 11A-11C.

[0094] From the recipient list menu at state 108, as previously discussed in connection with Fig. 4E, the customer may delete or modify the information for existing recipients, or add new recipients. If the information for a recipient needs to be updated, the customer selects the recipient from the recipient list menu. Upon selection of a recipient, the selection branch of state 108 leads to state 250 where that recipient's information is displayed in detail. The recipient information screen is shown by the screen display of Fig. 11A. With the screen displayed, the customer can modify the recipient's information as necessary. Afterward, the customer selects the "OK" function. Upon receipt of that function, the OK branch of state 250 leads to decisional step 252 where the zip code is validated.

[0095] As previously discussed in connection with

Figs. 5A-5B, the zip code is validated by comparing it with the zip code database 25 to determine if the zip code is proper for the state entered therewith. If the zip code is invalid, the NO branch of decisional step 252 returns to state 250 where the customer may modify the zip code and repeat the validation process. If the zip code is valid, the YES branch of decisional step 252 proceeds to step 254 where the delivery information of the new recipient is stored to the information storage device 24. Step 254 returns to state 108 where the recipient list menu is displayed and the customer may select the new recipient.

[0096] Returning to state 250 in which a recipient's information is displayed, the customer can erase that recipient by selecting the clear function. Upon receipt of that function, the clear branch of state 250 leads to step 256 where the recipient's information is erased. Step 256 returns to state 108 where the recipient list menu is displayed.

[0097] To add a new recipient to the list, the customer selects the new recipient function. Upon receipt of that selection, the new recipient branch of state 108 leads to state 260 where a screen is displayed for entering information for a new recipient. The recipient entry screen is shown by the screen display of Fig. 11B. The customer enters information for the new recipient and then selects the "OK" function. Upon receipt of that function, the OK branch of state 260 leads to step decisional 262 where the zip code is validated. Steps 262-264 for validating the zip code and storing the recipient information are similar to steps 252-254 and will thus not be separately described.

[0098] To find a wanted recipient, the customer may sort and search the recipient list from the recipient list menu. Steps 270-272 for sorting the list and steps 274-278 for searching the list are similar to steps 130-132 and steps 140-144 of Fig. 5, respectively. Accordingly, they will not be separately described. The screen for searching and sorting the list is shown by the screen display of Fig. 11C.

[0099] From the screen display of Fig. 11C, the customer may also choose to remove a recipient from the list. The remove branch of state 108 leads to state 280 where the recipient list is displayed for selection of a recipient to remove. Upon a selection of a recipient, that recipient is erased from the information storage device 24 at step 282. Step 282 returns to state 108 where the recipient list menu is displayed.

[0100] Thus, the present invention provides an intelligent telephone for preparing an electronic shipping record of a parcel. The intelligent telephone displays a parcel shipping procedure as a menu of choices for selection and stores delivery information received via the parcel shipping procedure as a shipping record. In the parcel shipping procedure, non-selectable features of the parcel shipping procedure are disabled and displayed in a dimmed style to indicate the same. Upon completion of a shipping record, a label is printed for

affixation to the parcel. Shipping records are transmitted to a central computer to update a tracking database and a billing database. Additionally, the intelligent telephone provides access to tracking and billing databases.

5 [0101] Programmers of ordinary skill in the art will be able to provide software to carry out the specific functions described above. Furthermore, those skilled in the art will understand that the various steps of the present invention may include other error branches that cause 10 the process to abort if an error condition exists in the smart phone 14. Such error branches are well known in the art and are not directly related to the present invention. Accordingly, they will not be further described.

15 **Claims**

20 1. A system for preparing an electronic shipping record of a parcel, comprising an intelligent telephone (14) including:

25 (a) an input device (22) for receiving information;
 (b) a data transfer device (28) for receiving and transmitting information;
 (c) an information storage device (24);
 (d) a screen device (18, 20) for displaying information; and
 (e) a processor (16) coupled to said input device, said data transfer device, said information storage device, and said screen device, said processor being operative to:

30 (1) store a parcel shipping procedure;
 (2) display said parcel shipping procedure with said screen device as a menu of choices for selection;
 (3) receive via said parcel shipping procedure delivery information relating to a parcel;
 (4) store said delivery information as a shipping record of said parcel; and
 (5) transmit said shipping record of said parcel.

35 2. The system as recited in Claim 1, wherein said input device comprises a set of programmable keys (95).

40 3. The system as recited in Claim 1, wherein said input device is a touch sensitive device associated with said screen.

45 5. The system as recited in any one of Claims 1 to 3, wherein said delivery information includes a zip code of a delivery address of said parcel and wherein said processor is further operative to validate said zip code.

5. The system as recited in any one of Claims 1 to 4, wherein said processor is further operative to indicate non-selectable features of said parcel shipping procedure with said screen device and to disable said non-selectable features of said parcel shipping procedure.

6. The system as recited in any one of Claims 1 to 5, wherein said processor is further operative to generate a bit map including said delivery information.

7. The system as recited in Claim 6, wherein said processor is further operative to print a label from said bit map, said label including said delivery information.

8. The system as recited in any one of Claims 1 to 7, wherein said delivery information includes an identification number of said parcel and wherein said processor is further operative to generate said identification number of said parcel.

9. The system as recited in any one of Claims 1 to 8, wherein said processor is further operative to display information for prompting entry of said delivery information for said parcel via said parcel shipping procedure.

10. The system as recited in any one of Claims 1 to 9, further comprising a recipient shipping list including at least one recipient and a delivery address associated with said recipient, wherein said processor is further operative to display said recipient shipping list as part of said parcel shipping procedure with said screen device.

11. The system as recited in any one of Claims 1 to 10, further comprising a central computer (34) including a tracking database (46) for a plurality of parcels; said data transfer device of said intelligent telephone receiving information from said central computer and transmitting information to said central computer; and said processor being operative to transmit said shipping record of said parcel to said central computer for updating said tracking database.

12. The system as recited in Claim 11, wherein said central computer further comprises a billing database (48) for storing a billing record associated with shipping said parcel, said billing record determined from said shipping record.

13. The system as recited in Claim 11 or Claim 12, wherein said processor is further operative to transmit information to said central computer to track said parcel.

14. The system as recited in any one of Claims 11 to 13, wherein said processor is further operative to transmit information to said central computer to indicate said parcel is ready for shipment.

15. The system as recited in any one of Claims 11 to 14, wherein said central computer (34) comprises

- (1) a central data transfer device (50) for transmitting information to a remote computer (36); and
- (2) a central processor (40) coupled to said central data transfer device;

said intelligent telephone processor being operative to store said delivery information as a shipping record of said parcel; and to transmit said shipping record of said parcel to said central computer for indicating said parcel is ready for shipment, said central processor, upon receipt of said shipping record, being operative to transmit information to said remote computer indicating said parcel is ready for shipment.

16. A method for preparing an electronic shipping record of a parcel, comprising:

- (a) receiving a parcel shipping procedure;
- (b) displaying on a screen of an intelligent telephone (14) said parcel shipping procedure as a menu of choices for selection;
- (c) recording via said parcel shipping procedure delivery information relating to a parcel; and
- (d) updating a tracking database (46) for said parcel.

17. The method as recited in Claim 16, further comprising the step of updating a billing database (48).

18. The method as recited in Claim 16 or Claim 17, wherein said delivery information includes a zip code of a delivery address of said parcel, further comprising the step of validating said zip code.

19. The method as recited in any one of Claims 16 to 18, further comprising the step of printing a label for affixation to said parcel, said label including said delivery information.

20. The method as recited in any one of Claims 16 to 19, wherein said delivery information includes an identification number of said parcel, further comprising the step of generating said identification number of said parcel.

21. The method as recited in any one of Claims 16 to 20, further comprising the step of displaying a re-

cipient shipping list as part of said parcel shipping procedure with said screen, said recipient shipping list including at least one recipient and a delivery address associated with said recipient.

22. The method as recited in any one of Claims 16 to 21, further comprising the step of transmitting information to a central computer to indicate said parcel is ready for shipment.

23. A user interface for preparing an electronic shipping record of a parcel in conjunction with an intelligent telephone (14), comprising:

- (1) a series of sequential screens for displaying a parcel shipping procedure as a menu of choices for selection;
- (2) means (22) for receiving via said parcel shipping procedure delivery information relating to a parcel, said delivery information including a zip code of a delivery address of said parcel;
- (3) means for validating said zip code;
- (4) means for disabling non-selectable features of said parcel shipping procedure;
- (5) means for indicating said non-selectable features of said parcel shipping procedure;
- (6) means (32) for printing a label for affixation to said parcel, said label including said delivery information;
- (7) means (24) for storing said delivery information as a shipping record of said parcel; and
- (8) means (28) for transmitting said shipping record of said parcel.

24. The user interface as recited in Claim 23, further comprising means for generating an identification number for said parcel.

25. The user interface as recited in Claim 23 or Claim 24, further comprising means for displaying information for prompting entry of said delivery information for said parcel via said parcel shipping procedure.

26. The user interface as recited in any one of Claims 23 to 25, further comprising means for indicating to a central computer (34) that said parcel is ready for shipment.

27. The user interface as recited in any one of Claims 23 to 26, further comprising means for displaying a recipient shipping list including at least one recipient and a delivery address associated with said recipient as part of said parcel shipping procedure.

Patentansprüche

1. System zur Erstellung eines elektronischen Versanddatensatzes eines Pakets, mit einem intelligenten Fernsprecher (14) der folgendes enthält:
 - (a) ein Eingabegerät (22) zum Empfangen von Informationen;
 - (b) ein Datenübertragungsgerät (28) zum Empfangen und Senden von Informationen;
 - (c) ein Informationsspeichergerät (24);
 - (d) ein Bildschirmgerät (18, 20) zur Anzeige von Informationen; und
 - (e) einen Prozessor (16), der an das Eingabegerät, das Datenübertragungsgerät, das Informationsspeichergerät und das Bildschirmgerät angekoppelt ist, wobei der Prozessor folgendes bewirkt:
 - (1) Speicherung eines Paketversandverfahrens;
 - (2) Anzeige des Paketversandverfahrens mit dem Bildschirmgerät als ein Menü von Auswahlmöglichkeiten;
 - (3) Empfang von Lieferinformationen bezüglich eines Pakets mittels des Paketversandverfahrens;
 - (4) Speicherung der Lieferinformationen als ein Versanddatensatz des Pakets; und
 - (5) Senden des Versanddatensatzes des Pakets.
2. System nach Anspruch 1, wobei das Eingabegerät eine Menge programmierbarer Tasten (95) umfaßt.
3. System nach Anspruch 1, wobei das Eingabegerät ein berührungssensitives Gerät ist, das dem Bildschirm zugeordnet ist.
4. System nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 3, wobei die Lieferinformationen eine Postleitzahl einer Lieferadresse des Pakets enthalten und wobei der Prozessor weiterhin bewirkt, daß die Postleitzahl bestätigt wird.
5. System nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 4, wobei der Prozessor weiterhin bewirkt, daß nicht wählbare Merkmale des Paketversandverfahrens mit dem Bildschirmgerät angezeigt und die nicht wählbaren Merkmale des Paketversandverfahrens gesperrt werden.
6. System nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 5, wobei der Prozessor weiterhin bewirkt, daß ein Bitmuster erzeugt wird, das die Lieferinformationen enthält.
7. System nach Anspruch 6, wobei der Prozessor weiterhin bewirkt, daß ein Etikett aus dem Bitmuster

ausgedruckt wird, wobei das Etikett die Lieferinformationen enthält.

8. System nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 7, wobei die Lieferinformationen eine Kennnummer des Pakets enthalten und wobei der Prozessor weiterhin bewirkt, daß die Kennnummer des Pakets erzeugt wird.

9. System nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 8, wobei der Prozessor weiterhin bewirkt, daß Informationen zur Aufforderung zur Eingabe der Lieferinformationen für das Paket mittels des Paketversandverfahrens angezeigt werden.

10. System nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 9, weiterhin mit einer Empfänger-Versandliste, die mindestens einen Empfänger und eine dem Empfänger zugeordnete Lieferadresse enthält, wobei der Prozessor weiterhin bewirkt, daß die Empfänger-Versandliste als Teil des Paketversandverfahrens mit dem Bildschirmgerät angezeigt wird.

11. System nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 10, weiterhin mit einem zentralen Computer (34), mit einer Nachverfolgungsdatenbasis (46) für eine Mehrzahl von Paketen; wobei das Datenübertragungsgerät des intelligenten Fernsprechers Informationen aus dem zentralen Computer empfängt und Informationen zu dem zentralen Computer sendet; und wobei der Prozessor bewirkt, daß der Versanddatensatz des Pakets zur Aktualisierung der Nachverfolgungsdatenbasis zu dem zentralen Computer gesendet wird.

12. System nach Anspruch 11, wobei der zentrale Computer weiterhin eine Gebührenabrechnungsdatenbasis (48) zur Speicherung eines dem Versand des Pakets zugeordneten Gebührenabrechnungsdatensatzes umfaßt, wobei der Gebührenabrechnungsdatensatz aus dem Versanddatensatz bestimmt wird.

13. System nach Anspruch 11 oder 12, wobei der Prozessor weiterhin bewirkt, daß Informationen zur Nachverfolgung des Pakets zu dem zentralen Computer gesendet werden.

14. System nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 13, wobei der Prozessor weiterhin bewirkt, daß Informationen zur Anzeige, daß das Paket fertig für den Versand ist, zu dem zentralen Computer gesendet werden.

15. System nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 14, wobei der zentrale Computer (34) folgendes umfaßt:

(1) ein zentrales Datenübertragungsgerät (50) zur Übertragung von Informationen zu einem

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entfernten Computer (36); und
(2) einen zentralen Prozessor (40), der an das zentrale Datenübertragungsgerät angekoppelt ist;

wobei der Prozessor des intelligenten Fernsprechers bewirkt, daß die Lieferinformationen als ein Versanddatensatz des Pakets gespeichert werden; und daß der Versanddatensatz des Pakets zu dem zentralen Computer gesendet wird, um anzeigen, daß das Paket fertig für den Versand ist,
wobei der zentrale Computer beim Empfang des Versanddatensatzes bewirkt, daß Informationen zu dem entfernten Computer gesendet werden, die anzeigen, daß das Paket fertig für den Versand ist.

16. Verfahren zur Erstellung eines elektronischen Versanddatensatzes eines Pakets, das folgendes umfaßt:

- (a) Empfang eines Paketversandverfahrens;
- (b) Anzeige des Paketversandverfahrens auf einem Bildschirm eines intelligenten Fernsprechers (14) als ein Menü von Auswahlmöglichkeiten;
- (c) Aufzeichnung von Lieferinformationen bezüglich eines Pakets mittels des Paketversandverfahrens; und
- (d) Aktualisierung einer Nachverfolgungsdatenbasis (46) für das Paket.

17. Verfahren nach Anspruch 16, weiterhin mit dem Schritt der Aktualisierung einer Gebührenabrechnungsdatenbasis (48).

18. Verfahren nach Anspruch 16 oder 17, wobei die Lieferinformationen eine Postleitzahl einer Lieferadresse des Pakets enthalten, weiterhin mit dem Schritt der Bestätigung der Postleitzahl.

19. Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 16 bis 18, weiterhin mit dem Schritt des Ausdrucks eines Etikets zum Ankleben an dem Paket, wobei das Etikett die Lieferinformationen enthält.

20. Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 16 bis 19, wobei die Lieferinformationen eine Kennnummer des Pakets enthalten, weiterhin mit dem Schritt des Erzeugens der Kennnummer des Pakets.

21. Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 16 bis 20, weiterhin mit dem Schritt der Anzeige einer Empfänger-Versandliste als Teil des Paketversandverfahrens mit dem Bildschirm, wobei die Empfänger-Versandliste mindestens einen Empfänger und eine dem Empfänger zugeordnete Lieferadresse enthält.

22. Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 16 bis 21, weiterhin mit dem Schritt des Sendens von Informationen zu einem zentralen Computer zur Anzeige, daß das Paket fertig für den Versand ist.

23. Benutzerschnittstelle zur Erstellung eines elektronischen Versanddatensatzes eines Pakets in Verbindung mit einem intelligenten Fernsprecher (14), die folgendes umfaßt:

- (1) eine Reihe aufeinanderfolgender Bildschirminhalte zur Anzeige eines Paketversandverfahrens als ein Menü von Auswahlmöglichkeiten;
- (2) ein Mittel (22) zum Empfangen von Lieferinformationen bezüglich eines Pakets mittels des Paketversandverfahrens, wobei die Lieferinformationen eine Postleitzahl einer Lieferadresse des Pakets enthalten;
- (3) ein Mittel zur Bestätigung der Postleitzahl;
- (4) ein Mittel zur Sperrung von nicht wählbaren Merkmalen des Paketversandverfahrens;
- (5) ein Mittel zur Anzeige der nicht wählbaren Merkmale des Paketversandverfahrens;
- (6) ein Mittel (32) zum Ausdrucken eines Etikette zum Ankleben an dem Paket, wobei das Etikett die Lieferinformationen enthält;
- (7) ein Mittel (24) zur Speicherung der Lieferinformationen als ein Versanddatensatz des Pakets; und
- (8) ein Mittel (28) zum Senden der Versandinformationen des Pakets.

24. Benutzerschnittstelle nach Anspruch 23, weiterhin mit einem Mittel zur Erzeugung einer Kennnummer für das Paket.

25. Benutzerschnittstelle nach Anspruch 23 oder 24, weiterhin mit einem Mittel zur Anzeige von Informationen zur Auflösung zur Eingabe der Lieferinformationen für das Paket mittels des Paketversandverfahrens.

26. Benutzerschnittstelle nach einem der Ansprüche 23 bis 25, weiterhin mit einem Mittel, das einem zentralen Computer (34) anzeigt, daß das Paket fertig für den Versand ist.

27. Benutzerschnittstelle nach einem der Ansprüche 23 bis 26, weiterhin mit einem Mittel zur Anzeige einer Empfänger-Versandliste, die mindestens einen Empfänger und eine dem Empfänger zugeordnete Lieferadresse enthält, als Teil des Paketversandverfahrens.

Revendications

1. Système permettant de préparer un document électronique d'expédition d'un colis, comprenant un téléphone intelligent (14) comportant:
 - (a) un dispositif d'entrée (22) pour recevoir une information;
 - (b) un dispositif de transfert de données (28) pour recevoir et transmettre une information;
 - (c) un dispositif de stockage d'information (24);
 - (d) un dispositif d'écran (18, 20) pour afficher une information; et
 - (e) un processeur (16) couplé audit dispositif d'entrée, audit dispositif de transfert de données, audit dispositif de stockage d'information et audit dispositif d'écran, ledit processeur pouvant être commandé pour:
 - (1) stocker une procédure d'expédition d'un colis;
 - (2) afficher ladite procédure d'expédition du colis au moyen dudit dispositif d'écran sous forme d'un menu de choix à sélectionner;
 - (3) recevoir via ladite procédure d'expédition de colis une information de livraison relative à un colis;
 - (4) stocker ladite information de livraison sous forme d'un document d'expédition dudit colis; et
 - (5) transmettre ledit document d'expédition dudit colis.
2. Système selon la revendication 1, dans lequel ledit dispositif d'entrée comprend un jeu de touches programmables (95).
3. Système selon la revendication 1, dans lequel ledit dispositif d'entrée est un dispositif à touche sensible associé audit écran.
4. Système selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 3, dans lequel ladite information de livraison comprend un code postal d'une adresse de livraison dudit colis et dans lequel ledit processeur est en outre commandé pour valider ledit code postal.
5. Système selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 4, dans lequel ledit processeur est en outre commandé pour indiquer des caractéristiques qui ne peuvent être sélectionnées de ladite procédure d'expédition de colis au moyen dudit dispositif d'écran et pour invalider lesdites caractéristiques qui ne peuvent être sélectionnées de ladite procédure d'expédition du colis.

6. Système selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 5, dans lequel ledit processeur est en outre commandé de façon à engendrer une carte binaire comportant ladite information de livraison.

7. Système selon la revendication 6, dans lequel ledit processeur est en outre commandé de façon à imprimer une étiquette à partir de ladite carte binaire, ladite étiquette comportant ladite information de livraison.

8. Système selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 7, dans lequel ladite information de livraison comporte un nombre d'identification dudit colis et dans lequel ledit processeur est en outre commandé de façon à engendrer ledit nombre d'identification dudit colis.

9. Système selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 8, dans lequel ledit processeur est en outre commandé de façon à afficher une information pour suggérer l'entrée de ladite information de livraison dudit colis via ladite procédure d'expédition du colis.

10. Système selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 9, comprenant en outre une liste d'expédition des destinataires comprenant au moins un destinataire et une adresse d'expédition associée audit destinataire, dans lequel ledit processeur est en outre commandé pour afficher ladite liste d'expédition des destinataires comme formant partie de ladite procédure d'expédition des colis au moyen dudit dispositif d'écran.

11. Système selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 10, comprenant en outre un ordinateur central (34) comprenant une base de données (46) de suivi pour une pluralité de colis ; ledit dispositif de transfert de données dudit téléphone intelligent recevant l'information dudit ordinateur central et transmettant l'information audit ordinateur central ; et ledit processeur étant commandé de façon à transmettre ledit document d'expédition dudit colis audit ordinateur central pour mettre à jour ladite base de données de suivi.

12. Système selon la revendication 11, dans lequel ledit ordinateur central comprend en outre une base de données de facturation (48) pour stocker un document de facturation associé à l'expédition dudit colis, ledit document de facturation étant déterminé à partir dudit document d'expédition.

13. Système selon la revendication 11 ou la revendication 12, dans lequel ledit processeur est en outre commandé de façon à transmettre une information audit ordinateur central de façon à suivre ledit colis.

14. Système selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 13, dans lequel ledit processeur est en outre commandé de façon à transmettre une information dudit ordinateur central pour indiquer que ledit colis est prêt à être expédié.

15. Système selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 14, dans lequel ledit ordinateur central (34) comprend :

- (1) un dispositif (50) central de transfert de données destiné à transmettre une information à un ordinateur éloigné (36) ; et
- (2) un processeur central (40) couplé audit dispositif central de transfert de données ;

ledit processeur de téléphone intelligent étant commandé pour stocker ladite information de livraison sous forme d'un document d'expédition dudit colis ; et de façon à transmettre ledit document d'expédition dudit colis audit ordinateur central pour indiquer que ledit colis est prêt à être expédié,

ledit processeur central, à réception dudit document d'expédition, étant commandé pour transmettre une information audit ordinateur éloigné indiquant que ledit colis est prêt à être expédié.

16. Procédé permettant de préparer un document électronique d'expédition d'un colis, comprenant les étapes consistant à :

- (a) recevoir une procédure d'expédition de colis ;
- (b) afficher sur un écran d'un téléphone intelligent (14) ladite procédure d'expédition de colis sous forme d'un menu de choix à sélectionner ;
- (c) enregistrer via ladite procédure d'expédition de colis une information de livraison relative à un colis ; et
- (d) mettre à jour une base de données de suivi (46) concernant ledit colis.

17. Procédé selon la revendication 16, comprenant en outre l'étape consistant à mettre à jour une base de données de facturation (48).

18. Procédé selon la revendication 16 ou la revendication 17, dans lequel ladite information de livraison comporte un code postal d'une adresse de livraison dudit colis, comprenant en outre l'étape consistant à valider ledit code postal.

19. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 16 à 18, comprenant en outre l'étape consistant à imprimer une étiquette pour la fixer audit colis, ladite

étiquette comportant ladite information de livraison.

20. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 16 à 19, dans lequel ladite information de livraison comprend un nombre d'identification dudit colis, comprenant en outre l'étape consistant à engendrer ledit nombre d'identification dudit colis. 5

21. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 16 à 20, comprenant en outre l'étape consistant à afficher une liste d'expédition des destinataires formant une partie de ladite procédure d'expédition des colis au moyen dudit écran, ladite liste d'expédition des destinataires comprenant au moins un destinataire et une adresse de livraison associée audit destinataire. 10

22. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 16 à 21, comprenant en outre l'étape consistant à transmettre une information à un ordinateur central pour indiquer que ledit colis est prêt à être expédié. 15

23. Interface d'utilisateur permettant de préparer un document électronique d'expédition d'un paquet en conjonction avec un téléphone intelligent (14), comprenant: 20

- (1) une série d'écrans séquentiels destinés à afficher une procédure d'expédition d'un colis sous forme d'un menu de choix à sélectionner;
- (2) des moyens (22) pour recevoir via ladite procédure d'expédition du colis une information de livraison se rapportant à un colis, ladite information de livraison comprenant un code postal et une adresse de livraison dudit paquet;
- (3) des moyens pour valider ledit code postal;
- (4) des moyens pour invalider des caractéristiques ne pouvant pas être sélectionnées de ladite procédure d'expédition des colis;
- (5) des moyens pour indiquer lesdites caractéristiques ne pouvant pas être sélectionnées de ladite procédure d'expédition des colis;
- (6) des moyens (32) pour imprimer une étiquette destinée à être fixée audit colis, ladite étiquette comportant ladite information de livraison;
- (7) des moyens (24) pour stocker ladite information de livraison en tant que document d'expédition dudit colis; et
- (8) des moyens (28) pour transmettre ledit document d'expédition dudit colis. 25

24. Interface d'utilisateur tel que revendiqué dans la revendication 23, comprenant en outre des moyens pour engendrer un nombre d'identification relatif audit colis. 30

25. Interface d'utilisateur selon la revendication 23 ou 35

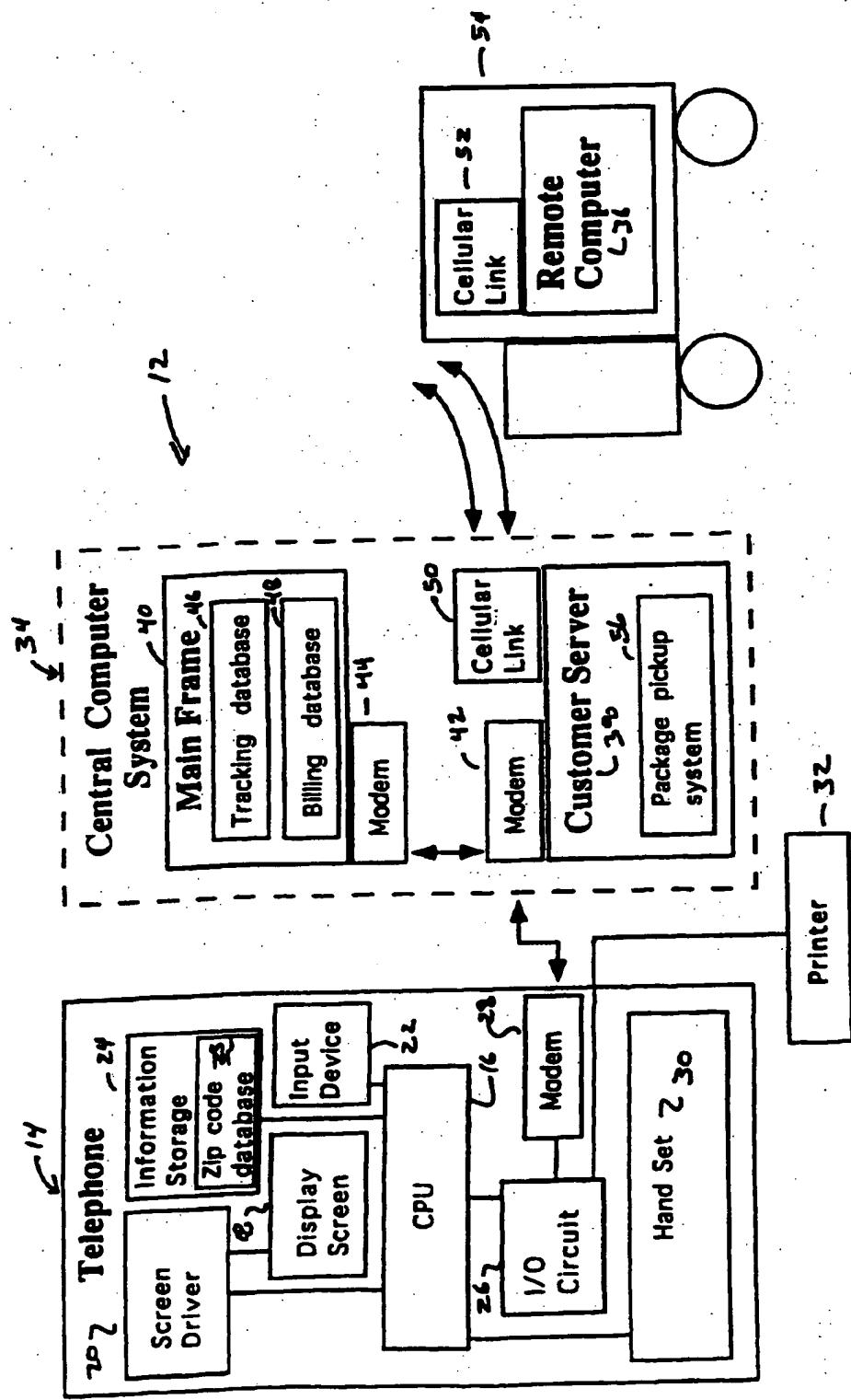
la revendication 24, comprenant en outre des moyens pour afficher une information pour suggérer l'entrée de ladite information de livraison relative audit colis via ladite procédure d'expédition des colis.

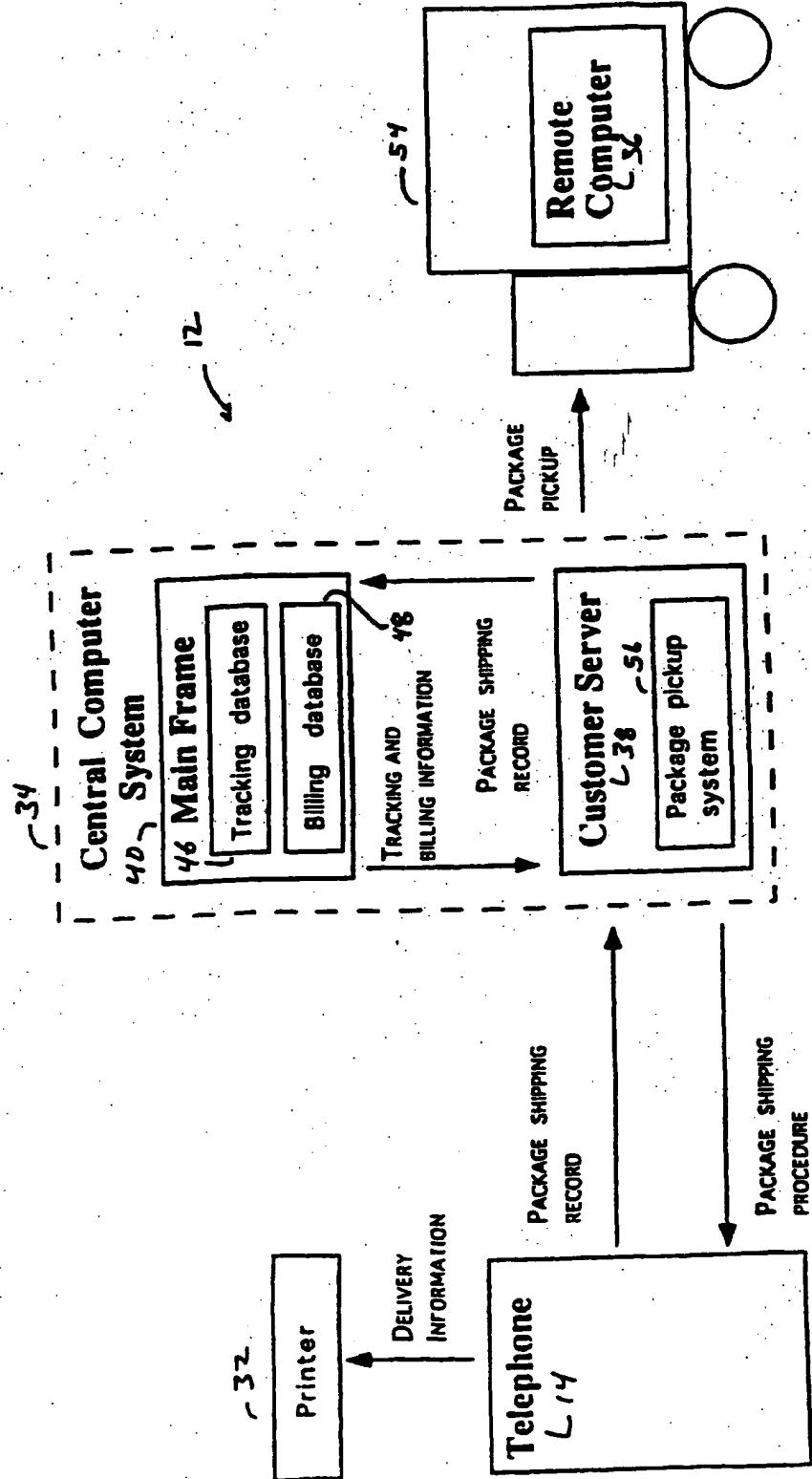
26. Interface d'utilisateur selon l'une quelconque des revendications 23 à 25, comprenant en outre des moyens pour indiquer à un ordinateur central (34) que ledit colis est prêt à être expédié. 40

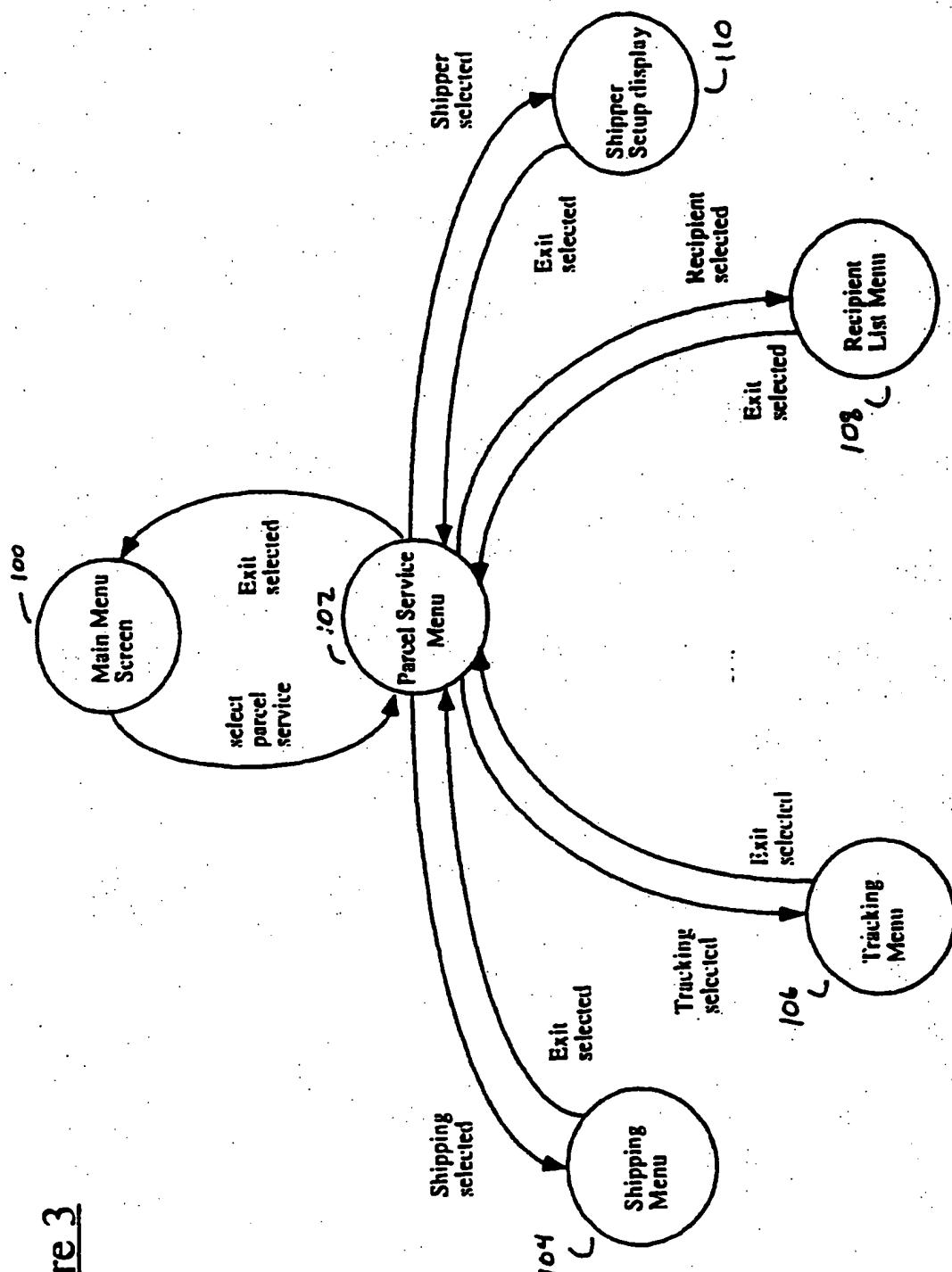
27. Interface d'utilisateur tel que revendiqué dans l'une quelconque des revendications 23 à 26, comprenant en outre des moyens pour afficher une liste d'expédition de destinataires comprenant au moins un destinataire et une adresse de livraison associée audit destinataire constituant une partie de ladite procédure d'expédition de colis. 45

28. Interface d'utilisateur tel que revendiqué dans l'une quelconque des revendications 23 à 26, comprenant en outre des moyens pour afficher une liste d'expédition de destinataires comprenant au moins un destinataire et une adresse de livraison associée audit destinataire constituant une partie de ladite procédure d'expédition de colis. 50

29. Interface d'utilisateur tel que revendiqué dans l'une quelconque des revendications 23 à 26, comprenant en outre des moyens pour afficher une liste d'expédition de destinataires comprenant au moins un destinataire et une adresse de livraison associée audit destinataire constituant une partie de ladite procédure d'expédition de colis. 55

Figure 1

Figure 2

**Figure 3**

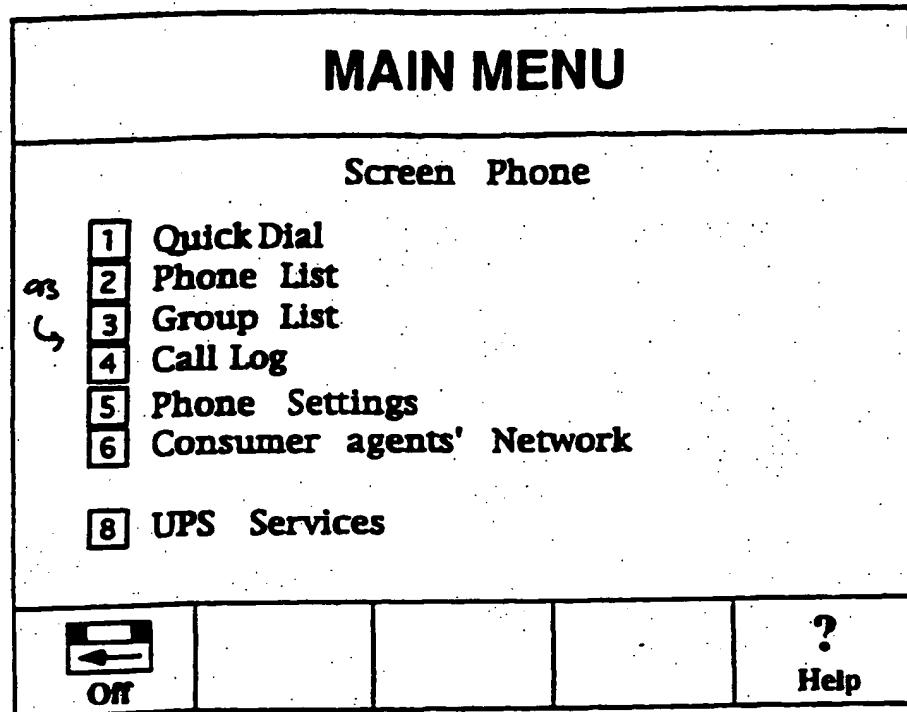


Figure 4A

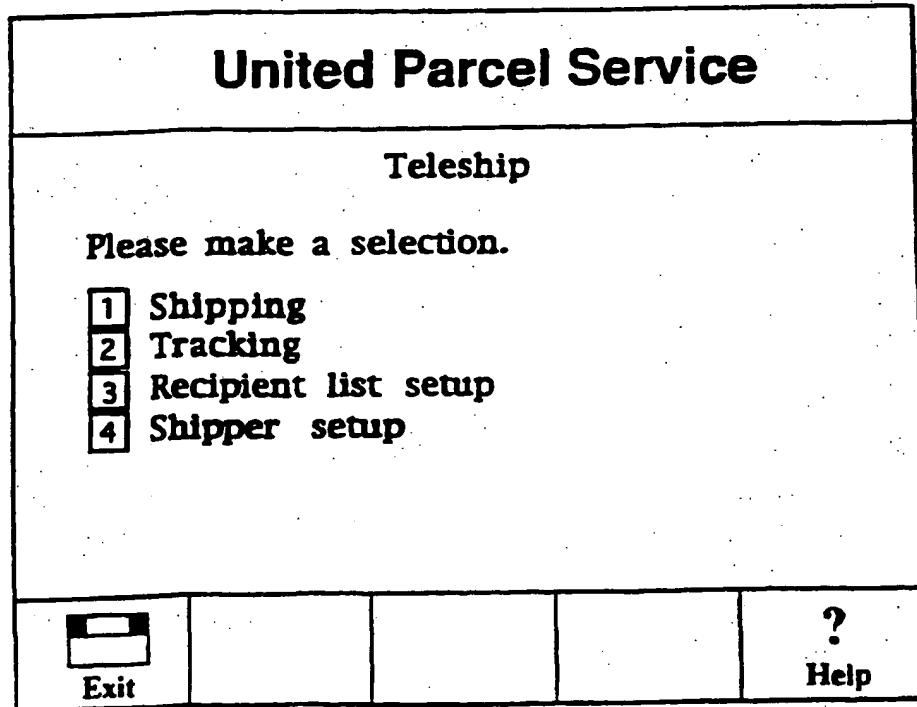


Figure 4B

United Parcel Service

Shipping

Which shipping option do you want?

1	Prepare a package
2	Review packages
3	Void a package
4	Start end of day processing

 Exit ? Help

Figure 4C

United Parcel Service

Tracking

Which tracking option do you want?

1	By tracking number
2	By shipping date
3	By recipient name

 Exit ? Help

Figure 4D

United Parcel Service

Recipient

Which recipient would you like to review?

<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Al Applewood (Customer service)
<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Al Goodwall (Legal)
<input type="checkbox"/> 3	Brian Jefferson (Operations)
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	Bob Knight (Public Affairs)
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Tom Knight (Legal)
<input type="checkbox"/> 6	Doug Smith (Operations)
<input type="checkbox"/> 7	Allen Smith (Legal)

Exit **Go Back** **New Recipient** **Other Options** **Help**

Figure 4E

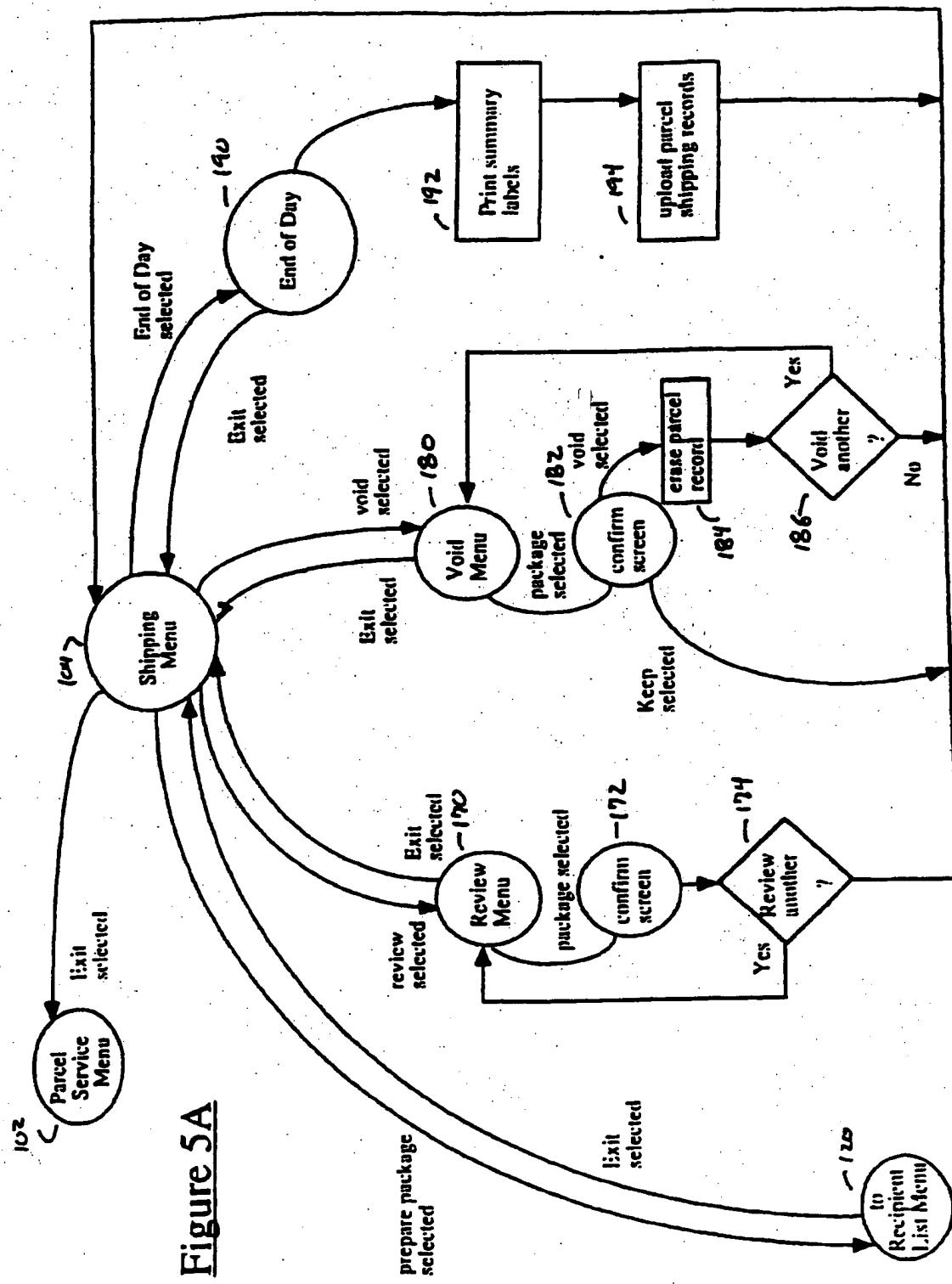
United Parcel Service

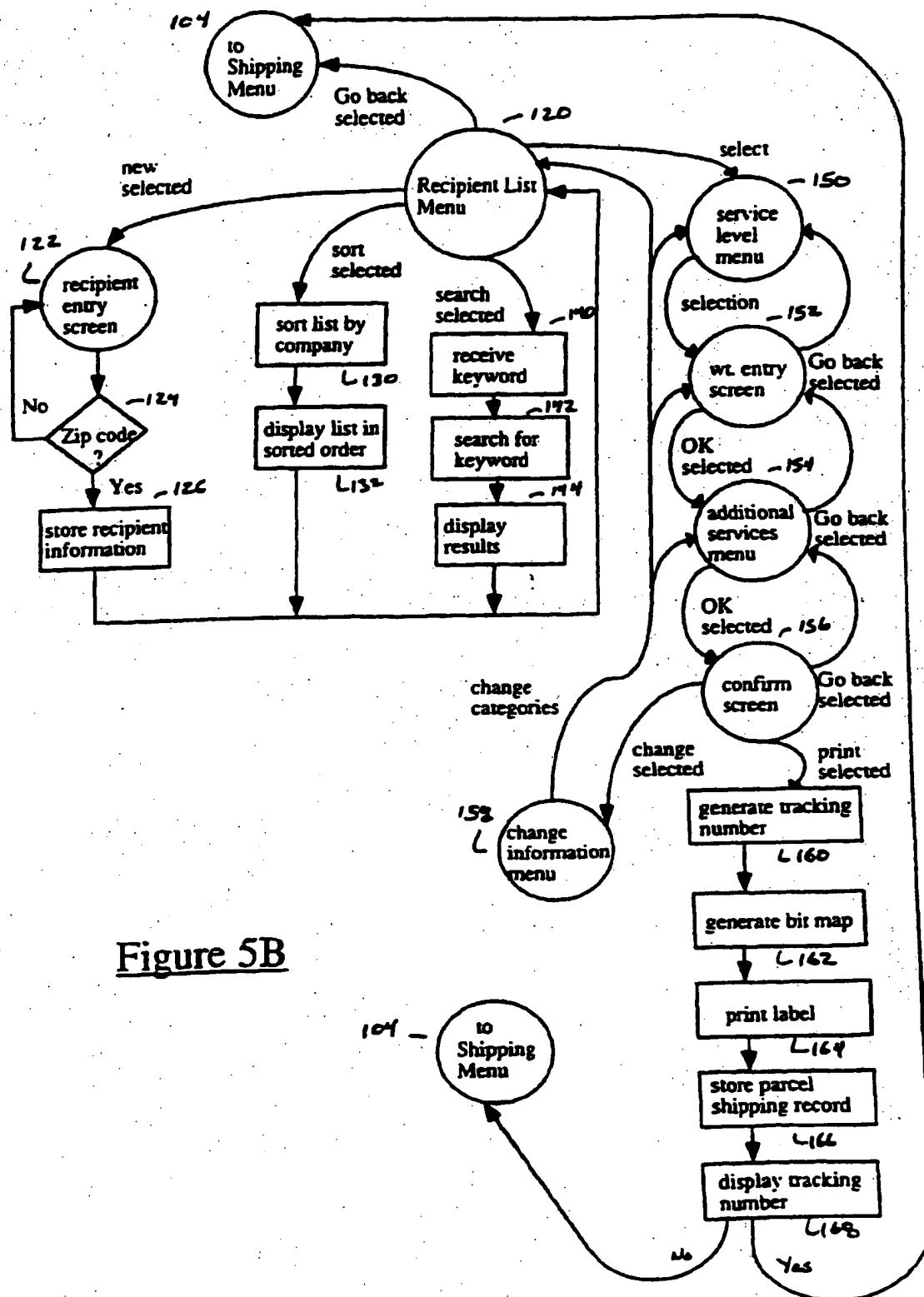
Shipper Information

Shipper ID	432 445
Contact	Bill Hanks
Company	XYZ Corporation
Street	1 Peachtree St. S.W.
	50th Floor
City	Atlanta
State	GA
Zip Code	30000
Telephone	(404) 555-1212

Exit **OK** **Clear** **Help**

Figure 4F

**Figure 5A**

Figure 5B

United Parcel Service

Recipient

Please select the recipient you want.

1 Al Applewood (Customer service)
2 Al Goodwall (Legal)
3 Brian Jefferson (Operations)
4 Bob Knight (Public Affairs)
5 Tom Knight (Legal)
6 Doug Smith (Operations)
7 Allen Smith (Legal)

 Exit  Go Back  New Recipient  Other Options  ? Help

Figure 6A

United Parcel Service

Recipient Information

Name
Company
Street

City
State
Zip Code
Residential

 Exit  Go Back  OK  Clear  ? Help

Figure 6B